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ABSTRACT

This report describes and evaluates the Chapter 2 Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (IBDP), a federal program designed to motivate children from age three to high school to read, and the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) organization--the sole contractor of the IBDP. Following an executive summary, an introductory section presents basic characteristics of the RIF program as well as its background and legislative history, and offers a literature review. The second section of the report describes the national administration of the RIF program, including RIF funding sources, the organizational structure of RIF, and specific RIF functions. The third section of the report describes local RIF projects, including local project requirements, and characteristics and administrative practices of local RIF projects. The last section of the report discusses two options for alternative ways to allocate federal funds to local RIF projects: (1) requiring RIF to make the development of financial self-sufficiency of local RIF projects an immediate priority; and (2) requiring RIF to distribute federal funds to only those local RIF projects serving children least likely to have access to books. (Eleven tables of data, three figures of data, and two brief descriptions of local programs are included; a copy of the IBDP law and amendment, a program renewal proposal form, notes on data presented in the third section of the report, and a population data sheet are attached.) (RS)

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**AN EVALUATION OF THE CHAPTER 2
INEXPENSIVE BOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM**

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PREPARED FOR:

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AN EVALUATION OF THE CHAPTER 2 INEXPENSIVE BOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Chapter 2 Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (IBDP) is a federal program designed to motivate children from age 3 through high school to read. The program provides inexpensive books free to children in conjunction with activities that encourage reading. Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF), a national non-profit organization, is the sole contractor of the IBDP and the vehicle through which IBDP funds are used to purchase and distribute books. RIF also uses private funds to support some RIF projects and activities.

RIF consists of a national organization and 2,939 local projects federally funded with Chapter 2 IBDP funds. Seventy-five percent of the book costs of these federally funded projects are paid for with federal funds, while the projects themselves raise the remaining 25 percent of their book costs and 100 percent of any other costs they incur. In addition to the federally funded local projects, there are 1,052 local projects that are supported totally by funds from private contributions and local fundraising efforts. All of the 3,991 projects utilize volunteer labor and may receive gifts-in-kind from donors, both of which keep projects' costs low.

Local RIF projects are administered by public agencies (e.g. schools) or non-profit organizations (e.g., Parent-Teacher Organizations). RIF projects are staffed primarily (over 99%) by volunteers who conduct book distributions in various types of locations, primarily in schools, but also in libraries, hospitals, homeless shelters, and Indian reservations. In 1990, over 8.7 million books were distributed through all RIF projects to more than 2.7 million young people in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. No comparable book distribution programs similar in scale and content to RIF currently exist.

The IBDP legislation was recently amended by the National Literacy Act of 1991 to give priority to funding additional projects serving children from low income families and other children with special needs. Prior to the enactment of the National Literacy Act of 1991, RIF was not required to target any particular population of children to be served.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RIF PROGRAM

The fundamental characteristics of RIF are as follows:

- projects are community-based;
- projects are volunteer run;
- project volunteers select the books to be distributed;
- projects must distribute a variety of inexpensive books;

- children choose their own books from those offered at the distributions and are allowed to keep those they choose;
- all children in a group served by a particular RIF project must be served equally by the project. (This is designed by RIF so as not to exclude or include any particular children within the group, and not to stigmatize any children within a group);
- projects conduct reading motivational activities; and
- parental involvement in project activities is emphasized.

THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE RIF PROGRAM

The RIF program receives funding primarily from the federal Government, but also from other sources. The total amount of federal funds that the national office of RIF received in Fiscal Year (FY) 1990 was \$8.5 million (81% of RIF's revenues). Private grants and contributions totalled approximately \$1.7 million (16% of RIF's revenues), and interest and other revenues totalled nearly \$280,000 (3% of RIF's revenues). Since federal funding began in 1976, federal appropriations have totalled nearly \$175 million in constant 1992 dollars.

Over the past 10 years, the amount of federal funds appropriated to RIF has, in most years, increased. Additionally, the amount of private contributions to the RIF program have also increased. However, since 1983, grants and contributions that are restricted to specific uses designated by the contributor have composed an increasing proportion of the total amount of RIF's grants and contributions. This increase in the proportion of funds designated for specific uses has limited RIF's discretion with respect to the use of non-federal funding.

RIF's national organization consists of a Board of Directors and a 46-employee national office. A portion of the costs of the national office are covered by federal funds, and a portion is covered by non-federal funds. The 22-member Board of Directors sets RIF's policy. RIF's national office is supervised by a president who oversees six division directors. The six divisions of the RIF national office are Finance; Development; Systems, Computer and Support Operations; Resource Coordination; Programs; and Special Projects.

Specific functions of the national office include paying book invoices for federally funded projects, providing technical assistance to local RIF projects, reviewing and approving organizations to administer the local projects, negotiating and monitoring discount agreements with book suppliers, and completing the reports required of RIF by the Department of Education.

LOCAL PROJECTS

The national office of RIF requires each federally funded local project to:

- raise 25 percent of the project's book costs, and 100 percent of administrative costs and the costs of motivational activities;
- conduct the minimum number of book distributions, as designated by the national office of RIF;

- conduct reading motivational activities;
- encourage parental participation;
- create a committee to select the books to be distributed;
- serve all children equally within the group served by the project;
- distribute books with differing subjects and differing levels of difficulty;
- adhere to price constraints;
- order books from book suppliers with which RIF has signed an agreement;
- adhere to RIF's rules to order and pay for books; and
- submit two types of reports and a renewal proposal annually.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 1991, the 2,939 federally funded local RIF projects held distributions at 10,513 sites nationwide. These projects were supported by 8,536 groups and distributed 7,577,437 books to 2,351,101 children. The majority of groups administering the local projects were schools or school districts. Organizations which sponsored local RIF projects, with funds or services, were primarily Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs). The vast majority of book distributions took place in schools, and the two types of volunteers most prevalent in federally funded projects were parents and teachers. Fifty-six percent of the children served by RIF projects were white, while 22 percent were black, 16 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were Asian American, 2 percent were American Indian, and less than one percent were other races or ethnicities. When compared to national percentages, federally funded RIF projects serve a greater proportion of minority children than exists in the national school-age population. Five percent of the school-age population in the United States is served by federally funded RIF projects.

Local RIF projects examined for this evaluation exhibited diverse administrative practices. Multi-site and single site projects utilized different methods of project administration. In addition, among the multi-site projects examined, several variations on multi-site project administration emerged. The types of people chosen as members of book selection committees varied; however, parents were included on the book selection committees in the majority of the projects. Motivational activities ranged from elaborate costume parties to the distribution of bookmarks.

CONCLUSIONS AND OPTIONS

Two overarching factors have implications for the RIF program in the future. First, it is the policy of RIF to continue funding the proposals of existing federally funded projects, without regard to the financial status of the projects, as long as the projects' renewal proposals are acceptable. (The renewal rate for federally funded projects is 99 percent.) In 1990, one thousand groups applied for federal funding and were turned-down due to a lack of federal funds available to start additional projects. RIF currently does not send federal proposal packets to groups requesting information on the program because federal funds are not available to start additional projects. The absence of any review of the financial status of existing federally funded projects and the existence of a waiting list suggest that the Department of Education may want to consider certain options with respect to the methods used to distribute federal funds to local RIF projects. The second factor affecting the Department of Education's oversight of the RIF program is the National Literacy Act of 1991. The

National Literacy Act of 1991 amends the IBDP legislation and stipulates that, in funding additional projects, RIF give priority to those projects that provide services to special populations, including low-income children and other children with special needs.

The following options focus on alternative ways to allocate federal funds to local RIF projects. Option 1 relates to developing the self-sufficiency of local RIF projects so that federal funds could be made available to new projects, and Option 2 relates to the targeting of federal funds to ensure that RIF projects serve those most in need. If the Department decides to pursue either of these or other options, there are several factors that might also be considered. These factors relate to reporting requirements and technical assistance, and are presented following the presentation of the options.

Option 1: Require RIF to make the development of financial self-sufficiency of local RIF projects an immediate priority.

Making the development of self-sufficiency among many of the current, federally funded projects an immediate priority would open up federal funding for additional projects. RIF's existing strategies for achieving local project independence, as described in their contract proposal, include informing the public about the RIF program and its activities, creating relationships between RIF and other national organizations, and coordinating RIF's activities with non-federal groups. Renewal proposals sent to the national office of RIF currently require local projects to specify the amounts of the local matched and unmatched share; the source of the local matched share; and the names of organizations donating funds, volunteers, or services. Existing technical assistance strategies and current reporting by projects on their financial status could be augmented to develop the financial independence of local RIF projects.

To assess the financial stability of local projects, the national office of RIF would need to collect additional financial data, including a more detailed description of the fundraising activities undertaken by the local projects and any partnerships that the local projects have with local businesses or organizations. On the basis of these financial data, the national office of RIF would need to analyze at least three years of financial data to assess the stability of the non-federal sources of revenue for the projects. For those projects considered by the national office to be potentially self-supporting, federal funding could be discontinued at the end of a three- to five-year period. This period would allow projects time to strengthen their financial base and to become completely independent of federal funds. Additional projects would be notified of this policy before signing their agreements with the national office of RIF.

Option 2: Require RIF to distribute federal funds to only those local RIF projects serving children least likely to have access to books.

Some local RIF projects may currently serve children for whom the RIF books are supplements to their personal library as well as those for whom RIF is their only avenue to book ownership. Implementing Option 2 would ensure that federal funds flow toward those children most likely to benefit from participation in RIF (i.e., those children least likely to have access to books). The difficulty associated with pursuing this option, however, is the definition and identification of children least likely to have access to books. An income-based definition could be used (e.g., the relative percentage of children in the local area eligible for subsidized lunches); however, barriers to book ownership are not exclusively income-based. Implementing this option would require the development of a systematic method for deciding which projects merit federal funding. The special needs populations specified in the National Literacy Act of 1991 could be a useful starting point for developing the system.

Should the Department of Education choose either of the above options, or any other method of re-allocating federal funds, the data currently requested in RIF local project proposals would need to be supplemented to include information on the income level and special needs of the populations to be served. RIF would need full governmental authority to request such information both at proposal time and during the period in which the project receives federal funds. An example of the kinds of information to be collected can be found in the Population Data Sheet (see Appendix D) developed by RIF, which requests that local projects voluntarily report the categories of special needs children they serve. It is also important to note that the volunteer nature of the projects poses complications with increased data collection. Increased data collection necessitates increased volunteer time devoted to paperwork. Volunteers represent various backgrounds and professions. In some cases, volunteers may not readily know how or where to locate the required income or other data. Additionally, non-federal sources of funding of local projects may fluctuate greatly from year to year since many projects rely on fundraisers such as car washes, bake sales, and T-shirt sales for their matching funds. It is difficult to predict the revenue that could accrue from such events or the stability of private donations from year to year. The collection of the supplemental data would also require increased administrative effort on the part of RIF's national office.

Because of these complications the Department of Education may want to consider requiring RIF to strengthen its technical assistance capacities in order to implement the above options. In addition to their current responsibilities, technical assistance staff would need to be able to provide local projects guidance on developing self-sufficiency and collecting the data on the populations they serve. As an example of such guidance, the national office of RIF would need to inform the volunteers of standard means of assessing the special needs of the populations that are served by the projects. Additionally, the RIF Handbook would need to be modified to provide guidance in these areas. An examination of the staffing and computer needs arising from the implementation of the options should also be considered.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (IBDP) is a federal program designed to motivate children from age three through high school to read by providing inexpensive books free to children in conjunction with activities that encourage reading. Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF), a national nonprofit organization, is the sole contractor of the IBDP and the vehicle through which IBDP funds are used to purchase and distribute books. There are no comparable book distribution programs similar in scale and content to the RIF program.

RIF consists of a Board of Directors, a national office, and local projects. The Board of Directors sets RIF's policy. RIF's national office oversees the program, provides technical assistance and other services to the local RIF projects, and oversees the use of federal funding. Approximately 63 percent of the RIF national office's costs are covered by federal funds; the remainder are covered by private contributions and revenues from other non-federal sources (e.g., interest). Approximately 22 percent of the federal funds are spent on activities of the RIF national office. These activities include providing technical assistance to local projects, monitoring local projects, negotiating and monitoring book supplier agreements for book discounts, and processing payment of book invoices.

Local organizations or public agencies sign agreements with the national office of RIF to operate local RIF projects. Local RIF projects are run primarily by volunteers, and distribute books to groups of children from age three through high school. In conjunction with book distributions, the local projects conduct pre- and post-distribution reading activities to motivate reading. Approximately three-quarters (2,939) of the local projects currently receive federal funding as part of the IBDP, and the remaining one-quarter operate solely on funds raised by the project or received from private contributors.¹ Federally-funded projects have 75 percent of their book costs paid for with federal funds, and must raise the remainder of the book costs, all administrative costs, and any other costs from non-federal sources. For the non-federal portion of local projects' costs, projects rely on the free services of volunteers, donated materials and funds, and funds raised through bake sales or other fundraising activities. Currently, there are a total of 3,991 local projects conducting book distributions

¹Non-federally funded projects are not considered part of the IBDP. Since they are not part of the IBDP, the non-federally funded RIF projects are not a focus of this report and will not be discussed except in brief comparison to federally funded projects in a later chapter.

in various types of locations such as libraries, hospitals, Indian reservations, and homeless shelters, although 88 percent of federally funded projects' distributions are conducted in schools. In 1990, over 8.7 million books were distributed through all RIF projects to more than 2.7 million young people in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

This evaluation, prepared for the Office of Policy and Planning of the U.S. Department of Education, describes the national administration of RIF and the operation of the federally funded local IBDP projects, and provides options to improve the program. The remainder of this chapter describes the basic characteristics of the RIF program, the background and legislative history of RIF, a literature review on RIF and the IBDP, and the organization of the report.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RIF PROGRAM

The stated objective of the IBDP is to motivate youngsters to read. To achieve this objective, local RIF projects utilize a community-based, volunteer-run organizational structure. RIF projects distribute books that children choose and keep, conduct motivational activities, involve parents in the program, and, by RIF requirements, serve all children within their projects equally. The fundamental characteristics of RIF's local projects are as follows:

- **Projects are community-based.** The national office of RIF allows a large degree of flexibility and autonomy to the local project administrators when running the projects. The national office of RIF allows projects to choose the groups of children to serve since RIF assumes that community members know better which groups of children in their communities need the program the most. In addition, RIF assumes that members of the community are more aware of the preferences and characteristics of their own communities; therefore, they are better able to choose motivational activities and books that are appropriate for the children they serve.
- **Projects are volunteer-run.** Nearly all (99%) of the staff running local RIF projects are volunteers. The volunteer aspect of the program keeps the projects' costs low and allows more money to be spent on purchasing books.
- **Children choose their own books.** The national office of RIF requires all of the local projects to allow the children to choose their own books from those offered at the distribution without adult interference or pressure. The purpose of allowing children to choose their books is to give them a sense of autonomy, a chance to discover

literature on their own, and an opportunity to develop their own reading preferences.

- **Children are given the books to keep.** The RIF program gives, rather than loans, books to the children. The purpose of this element of the program is to give children the pride of book ownership. In addition, this dissemination puts more books in the children's homes, making reading materials more accessible to the children. Having books in the home may also encourage more families to read.
- **Projects conduct reading motivational activities.** The national office of RIF requires all of the local projects to provide pre- and post-distribution activities that pertain to reading and are designed to encourage the children served to want to read. Although the types of motivational activities conducted vary widely from project to project, the purpose of the activities is to make the book distributions fun and interesting for the children, and to give the children a basis for understanding the importance of reading.
- **Projects must attempt to involve parents.** One of RIF's requirements for local projects is that they attempt to involve parents in some part of the projects' activities. The national office of RIF strongly suggests that, at least, parents should be notified of upcoming distributions through letters or announcements. The involvement of parents is designed to communicate to the children that their role models outside the school also realize the importance of reading. In addition, parents who are involved in the program are more likely to see its value and encourage reading in the home.
- **Current RIF policy requires equality within groups served.** To avoid stigmatizing the children served or promoting exclusivity among children, existing projects are required by RIF to serve all children within the group. For example, if a project proposes to serve fourth-graders in a classroom, it must serve all students in that classroom. According to current RIF policy, the project is not allowed to serve only some of the children in the classroom, such as the remedial readers. However, RIF allows projects to serve groups of children who have already been identified through pre-existing programs, such as Chapter 1 and Migrant programs.

RIF BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Margaret McNamara, the late wife of former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, originated the RIF program in 1966. While working as a volunteer in the Washington, D.C. schools,

Margaret McNamara witnessed the excitement that children exhibited when they were given books of their own. This observation inspired McNamara to create Reading Is Fundamental. The original program served children of all income levels, although it focused on serving low-income children. RIF began as a single pilot project in a D.C. school. On the basis of the performance of the first project, the Ford Foundation gave McNamara funding to expand the concept to 10 additional projects.

After 10 years of existence, RIF, funded by private contributions, had grown to approximately 400 projects. In 1976, the 10-year-old RIF program received a federal contract. This contract designated Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. as the sole contractor for the Inexpensive Book Distribution Program. The IBDP originated as part of the National Reading Improvement Act of 1974 as an effort to incorporate reading motivation into policy on child literacy. From the law, the IBDP's stated objectives are to encourage and coordinate the creation of projects that distribute inexpensive books to children and that motivate children to read. The IBDP was not targeted toward any special populations of youngsters and essentially gave federal funds to Reading Is Fundamental to support and expand the program that it had already established.

Since its enactment in 1976, the IBDP law has undergone several significant alterations. The original legislation of the IBDP provided federal funding for 50 percent of local IBDP projects' book costs. Local projects were required to raise the funds for the other 50 percent. Just a few years after first receiving federal funding, the national office of RIF informed Congress that the IBDP projects, especially those that were most in need, were struggling to raise their 50 percent of the project costs. To make operation easier for the established projects and also to provide a greater incentive for the creation of new RIF projects, the IBDP law was amended in 1979 to increase the proportion of federal funding to local IBDP projects to 75 percent. The same legislation, enacted in 1979, also included a provision for projects serving seasonal or migrant farmworkers.² As a result of increased legislative awareness at that time of the plight of migrant children, Congress modified the IBDP to provide 100 percent federal funding for those projects serving migrant populations. Although this change in the program granted greater funding to migrant projects, it did not require that migrant projects be given priority over non-migrant projects in RIF's funding decisions. Thus, the IBDP remained a non-targeted program. Twelve years later, however, the National Literacy Act of 1991 was enacted. This act stipulates that, in funding additional projects, the IBDP give priority to those projects serving

²The original legislation of the IBDP included no provisions for special populations.

special populations. Prior to this, the only specification on the population served by the program was that the recipients be pre-school, elementary school, or secondary school-aged children. The National Literacy Act of 1991 amends the IBDP law as follows: "...in the fiscal year 1991 and each succeeding fiscal year, [RIF] will give priority in the selection of additional local programs to programs and projects which serve children and students with special needs including, at a minimum--

- (A) low-income children (particularly such children in high poverty areas);
- (B) children at risk for school failure;
- (C) children with disabilities;
- (D) emotionally disturbed children;
- (E) foster children;
- (F) homeless children;
- (G) migrant children;
- (H) children without access to libraries;
- (I) institutionalized or incarcerated children; and
- (J) children whose parents are institutionalized or incarcerated" (see Appendix A).

The National Literacy Act, enacted in July 1991, changes the IBDP legislation significantly to require priority in funding additional RIF projects to those that serve populations with special needs. Prior to the enactment of the National Literacy Act, RIF was not required to target any particular population of children to be served.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before discussing the RIF program, it is useful to review what is currently known about RIF and its effect on certain outcomes, as identified in literature. Most literature on the IBDP and the RIF program has focused on the administrative workings of RIF and the effects of local RIF projects on the reading and reading motivation of the children served.

RIF Administration

The most in-depth study of the IBDP was conducted by General Research Corporation (GRC) in 1980. GRC conducted 38 case studies of local projects, chosen from the 1,842 projects that were active at the time of the study. The sites visited were selected by grouping the projects by region and stratifying the groups by project size. The number of projects selected from each region was based on the number of children served by RIF projects in that region. The GRC evaluation was unable to complete a second phase of follow-up data collection on the program's effects on children because of a cut in the evaluation's funding. However, GRC did evaluate the administrative practices of the national office of RIF, including policy management, organizational structure, and information systems. GRC found RIF's performance in all of these areas to be effective, but observed that RIF's policy planning could be improved with more research on the effects of the program. In the area of organizational structure, GRC found that RIF experienced some staffing and work-load problems during times of high activity but found the problems to be adequately resolved. GRC observed that RIF's information system at the time lacked local project data on funding levels, and the number of volunteers, students, and sites.

GRC made several policy for the RIF program on the basis of the responses of local personnel and parents and the data gathered by evaluators while studying the local projects. According to the GRC analysis, technical assistance had not been adequately provided to local projects while they were in the beginning stages. On the basis of this observation, GRC suggested that RIF improve its technical assistance by providing more technical information that would assist local projects in all stages of development. To increase information exchange between programs, GRC suggested that RIF create a network linking local projects with other book distribution programs. Also recommended was an increase in the number of national RIF personnel devoted to technical assistance, and a toll-free line to make the acquisition of technical assistance easier for local project personnel.

RIF administrative practices over the last 10 years have responded to these options. RIF now has local project data on computer, including funding levels and the number of volunteers, students, and sites. With respect to providing early technical assistance, local RIF projects interviewed for this evaluation uniformly reported highly effective technical assistance in the early stages of project development, most notably from the RIF Handbook, developed in 1989 and compiled from earlier technical assistance pamphlets. Although no formal network exists to link other projects with local

book distribution programs, there is coordination among community service groups within local communities. Because GRC did not specify the number of technical assistance staff existing at the time of the 1980 evaluation, it is not possible to comment on technical assistance staffing changes made by RIF. The national office of RIF explored the possibility of instituting a toll-free line but rejected the idea because the costs of such a line were prohibitive.

Effects of the Program

Although the literature on the effects of the RIF program focuses on individual RIF projects and not a representative sample of RIF projects, the studies have concluded that specific local projects have had various positive effects on children, including increasing the time children spend reading, increasing the number of books children buy, creating more positive attitudes toward reading, and increasing peer interactions concerning reading.

Several studies of RIF projects concluded that, as a result of RIF, the students served by these projects increased the **amount of time they spent reading**. Ball (1981) conducted a study of the R.E.A.D. (Reading for Enjoyment And Development) program at Oakwood Junior High School in Dayton, Ohio. This program, a combined RIF and uninterrupted sustained silent reading program, had conducted four book distributions at the time of the survey in 1980. Ball found that, as a result of the program, 71 percent of the students surveyed reported reading more often, and 59 percent reported increasing the time spent on pleasure reading. Ross and Fletcher (1980) conducted a study of over 1,300 Tennessee fourth through sixth graders participating in a local RIF project over a one-year period. They found that the number of students who reported that they had read three or more books increased by 4 percent, and the number of students who reported that they had read no books decreased by 2 percent after a year of RIF participation. Similar results were found by Marsh and Williams (1980), from California State University, who evaluated a local RIF project in Sacramento, CA. For 16 weeks, evaluators studied 154 first through sixth graders from varied backgrounds. From surveys administered to the children served by the project, the evaluators found that the children reported finishing books more often after participating in the RIF project.

Another finding of the Ross and Fletcher study (1980), which may also indicate increased reading, was **an increase in the number of books students report buying annually**. While increasing book purchases is not an objective of the program, the Ross and Fletcher study reported that the proportion of students stating that they bought three or more books annually rose from 57.4

percent before participating in RIF to 71.7 percent after participating. Of these percentages, 52.9 percent of the students from the lower socioeconomic class claimed to have bought three or more books before participation in RIF and 65.2 percent after participation. Nearly 66 percent of the upper-middle class students claimed the purchase of three or more books before participation versus 84.7 percent afterward.

Studies of RIF projects have also focused on the RIF projects' effects on student **attitudes toward reading**. Ball's 1981 study showed that many of the students surveyed stated that their enjoyment of reading had increased. Marsh and Williams (1980) reported that, after the project, students as a whole displayed significantly stronger feelings that reading books was a worthwhile activity and that the ability to read was an important skill. Ross and Fletcher (1980), however, found that over 80 percent of student attitudes toward reading were positive from the outset, and the RIF project caused no difference in these attitudes. Ross and Fletcher did, however, conclude that rather than changing the students' attitudes toward reading, RIF "translate(d) positive attitudes into active reading." Marsh and Williams likewise concluded that RIF can have positive effects even on student populations in which students already recognized reading as important.

Several studies revealed that the RIF projects changed **peer interactions concerning reading**. Students were found to be more likely, after participation in RIF, to share books with other students (Ross and Fletcher, 1980; and Marsh and Williams, 1980). Ross and Fletcher also discovered that students were more likely to relate information concerning books to other students.

The studies also cited other effects of these RIF projects. In Ball's study (1981), students reported an improvement in reading skills. Seventy-four percent of the students surveyed from the R.E.A.D. program reported an increase in reading enjoyment, in understanding the reading material, and in reading speed, or a combination of these factors. In addition, Marsh and Williams (1980) stated that the participants in the California RIF project had more favorable views of libraries after participation in the project.

An important issue raised in the GRC evaluation (1980) was whether reading motivation and RIF program success stems from the ownership of the books or participation in motivational activities. In GRC's survey of parents of the children served by RIF projects, more than 90 percent of parents stated that their child owned some books, and nearly 50 percent stated that their child owned more than 25 books. Since most children already owned books, GRC concluded that the activities conducted by RIF projects may have had a greater effect on motivating children to read than on the

actual ownership of the books. In other words, GRC suggested that RIF might have the same effect if it simply conducted motivational activities but distributed no books.

Internal surveys conducted by the national office of RIF also report positive outcomes with respect to reading and reading-related skills. A 1983 RIF survey by Yankelovich, Skelly & White, Inc. found positive effects on reading interests, reading achievement, and other attitudinal and motivational variables.

Thus, to date, research on RIF has provided indications that RIF has positive outcomes, but the research has not examined a representative sample of local RIF projects and, in the case of internal RIF surveys, has not been independent. Further, the GRC study, which intended to report on the effects of RIF in terms of reading variables and effectiveness of administrative practices, was never completed.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Chapters two and three provide descriptions of the national administration of the RIF program and of the local projects of RIF. The fourth chapter discusses issues raised from the analysis of the data collected for this evaluation and presents options for the enhancement of the RIF program.

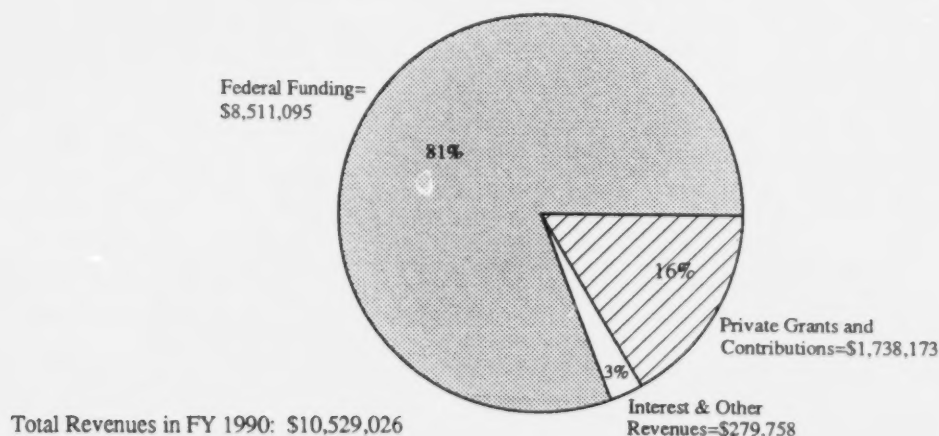
2. THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE RIF PROGRAM

RIF is headquartered in Washington, D.C. With a staff of 46, the national office is responsible for disbursing federal funds; providing services to the local projects, including technical assistance and organization of special events; and monitoring local projects. This chapter describes the national administration of the RIF program and funding sources supporting RIF, including both IBDP (federal) funds and private contributions. The organizational structure of RIF is presented with descriptions of the general responsibilities of each of the units within the organization. Finally, the specific functions performed by the national office of RIF are discussed in detail. The presentation of the specific functions of the national office of RIF are organized by functional categories: book costs, technical assistance, and administration.

RIF FUNDING SOURCES³

Since federal funding began in 1976, federal appropriations have totalled nearly \$175 million in constant 1992 dollars. The total amount of federal funds that the national office of RIF received in Fiscal Year (FY) 1990 was \$8,511,095.⁴ The remainder of the funds received by the RIF program at the national level were from private grants and contributions, which totalled \$1,738,173 in FY 1990, and from interest and other revenues, which totalled \$279,758 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Revenue Sources



³The funds discussed in this section do not include the amounts raised by local projects.

⁴The FY 1990 federal revenue figure is not the same as the FY appropriation figure because RIF has up to three years to expend the appropriation amount.

Federal Funds

Over the past 10 years, the amount of federal funds appropriated to RIF has, in most years, increased.⁵ Year-to-year changes in federal appropriations have ranged from a decrease of 4 percent in FY 1986 to an increase of 16 percent in FY 1987 (see Table 1).

Table 1 FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE IBDP · FY 1982 - FY 1992		
Fiscal Year	Appropriation	Percentage Change Over Previous Year
1982	\$5,850,000	0
1983	5,850,000	0
1984	6,500,000	11
1985	7,000,000	8
1986	6,698,000*	-4
1987	7,800,000	16
1988	7,659,000	-2
1989	8,398,000	10
1990	8,576,000	2
1991	9,271,000*	8
1992	10,000,000	8
* In FY 1986 and FY 1991, some of the appropriations were sequestered, so the actual amounts received for those years were \$6,697,644 and \$9,270,877, respectively.		

⁵While federal appropriations to RIF have increased, it should be noted that juvenile mass market paperbacks have experienced a price increase of 34 percent from 1986-1990 and juvenile trade paperbacks experienced a price increase of 18 percent over the same time period (*Bowker Annual of Library and Trade Information*, 1990).

Private Grants and Contributions

The total amounts of private grants and contributions received by RIF from FY 1982 to FY 1990 are presented in Table 2. Year-to-year changes in the amount of private grants and contributions ranged from a decrease of 19 percent in FY 1983 to an increase of 67 percent in FY 1986. Overall, the amount of private contributions to the RIF program has increased significantly over the past nine years, with only a few years showing declines.

Table 2 TOTAL GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NON-FEDERAL SOURCES FY 1982 - FY 1990		
Fiscal Year	Total Amount of Grants and Contributions	Percentage Increase Over Previous Year
1982	\$ 479,115	N/A
1983	386,502	-19
1984	416,475	8
1985	550,782	32
1986	922,143	67
1987	913,456	-1
1988	1,282,115	40
1989	1,795,103	40
1990	1,738,173	-3
Source: Coopers and Lybrand Financial Audits of RIF.		

From FY 1983 to FY 1990, the percentage of grants and contributions that are restricted to uses designated by the contributor has gradually increased as a proportion of the total annual amount of RIF's grants and contributions (see Table 3). Restricted funds are those funds designated by the contributor to be used for specific activities or purposes, such as supporting local projects located in particular geographic areas, or supporting projects that serve particular populations.

Table 3 RESTRICTED AND UNRESTRICTED GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NON-FEDERAL SOURCES FY 1982 - FY 1990				
Fiscal Year	Amount Unrestricted	Percentage Unrestricted of Total	Amount Restricted	Percentage Restricted of Total
1982	\$246,616	51	\$ 232,500	49
1983	369,516	96	16,986	4
1984	328,475	79	88,000	21
1985	359,557	65	191,225	35
1986	615,252	67	306,891	33
1987	513,322	56	400,134	44
1988	710,215	55	571,900	45
1989	805,624	45	989,479	55
1990	636,816	40	1,051,357	60
Source: Coopers and Lybrand Financial Audits of RIF.				

In FY 1990, 103 corporations, foundations, and organizations contributed to RIF. Of these, 51 were long-term contributors, contributing funds for five years or more. The major contributors in 1990, contributing \$100,000 or more to the program, were Ameritech Foundation, Chrysler Corporation Fund, Student Loan Marketing Association, and Waldenbooks. Of these four, Chrysler and Waldenbooks were long-term contributors.

Funds received from private sources are typically used by RIF to assist non-federally funded local projects, cover administrative costs not included in the federal expenditure categories, or support special events or activities not included in the federal expenditure categories. These activities, although not functions of the IBDP and not federally funded, benefit both federally and non-federally funded projects.

In summary, the federal appropriation to the RIF program has, for the most part, increased steadily and significantly over the last 10 years. The amount of private funds contributed to the RIF program has kept pace with the increases in the federal amount. However, the increase in the receipt of restricted funds for specific uses has limited RIF's discretion in the use of non-federal funding.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF RIF

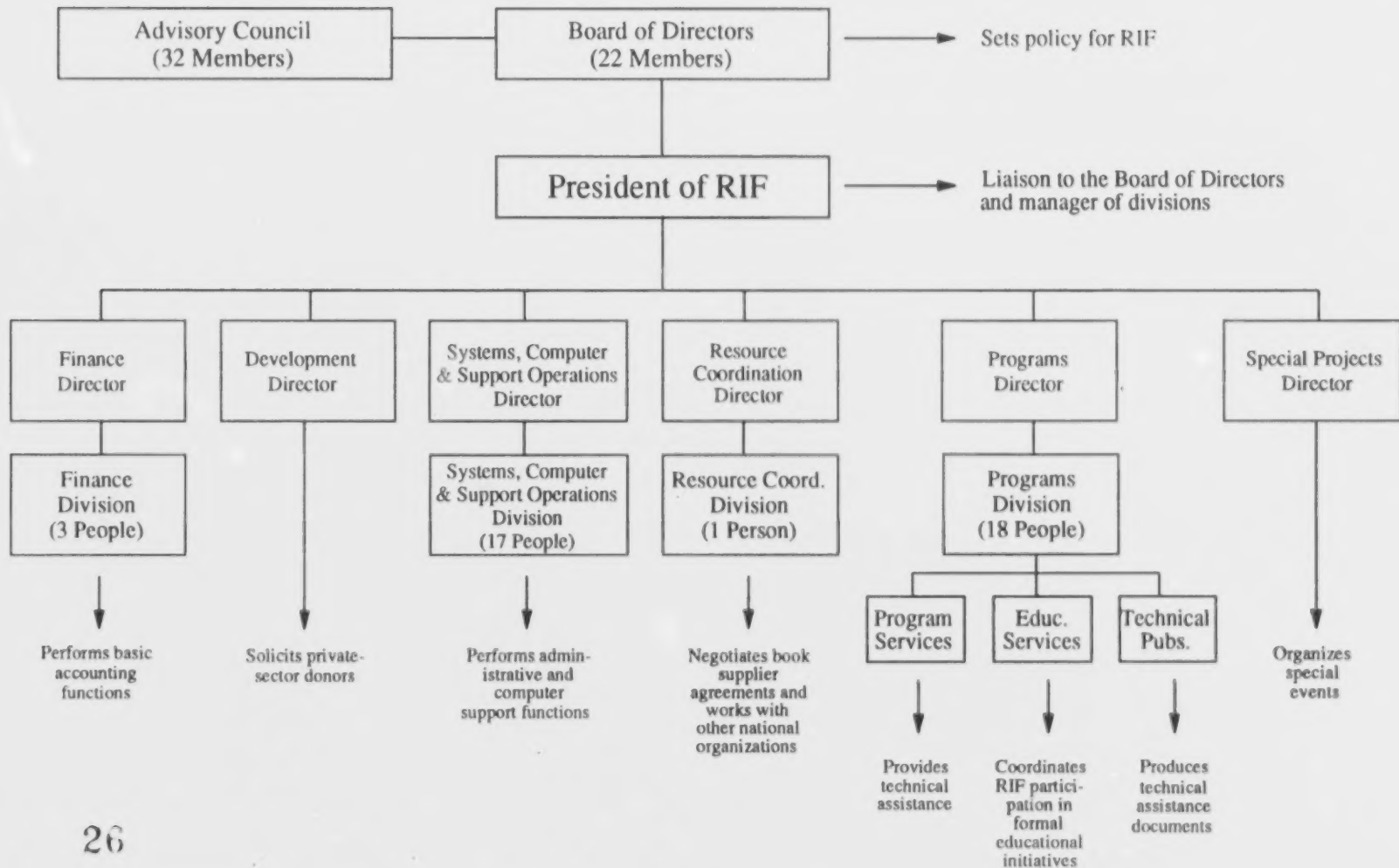
The hierarchical, organizational structure employed by RIF at the national level performs the functions of the IBDP and the total RIF organization. RIF consists of a board of directors and a 46-employee national office (see Figure 2).

Board of Directors

The board of directors creates RIF's policies and is legally responsible for RIF. According to RIF's bylaws, the board of directors has "full power to take any action consistent with the purposes of the Corporation...." The board's nominating committee nominates candidates for vacancies on the Board. New directors are elected by a majority vote of existing directors, and serve three-year terms. Of the 22 directors, five are officers and members of the executive committee. The president of RIF is a member of the board of directors, and is the only member who is compensated by RIF. The board of directors is composed of persons having various areas of expertise, including communications, business, volunteerism, and child literacy. To set policy, the executive committee deliberates on issues for the board and develops options. These options are then presented to the rest of the board for approval or disapproval. The board of directors meets twice annually and meets at other times during the year when deemed necessary by the chairman of the board.

RIF's board of directors also has an advisory council. The members of the advisory council are appointed by the chairman of the board, and consist of such celebrities as Barbara Bush, Lee Iacocca, and Oprah Winfrey. According to RIF's bylaws, the members of the advisory council are "distinguished, interested individuals whose support and association with Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.

Figure 2
Organizational Structure of RIF



would be helpful in furthering the purposes of the program." The advisory council exercises no policymaking role; however, members of the advisory council help RIF in different ways. For example, some advisory council members travel around the country helping to publicize RIF, while others help raise corporate contributions to the RIF program.

National Office

The RIF national office employs a president and 45 people in six divisions. The six divisions are Finance; Systems, Computer, and Support Operations; Development; Resource Coordination; Programs; and Special Projects.⁶ Each division is headed by a director. According to RIF, all employees conduct activities that, in fact, span the responsibilities of many divisions. Of the 46 employees, federal funds pay for 33 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Each of the 46 employees performs some functions that are related to the IBDP and some that are not. Therefore, federal funds pay for a portion of some employees' salaries, while others' salaries are paid for solely with non-federal funds.

The president of RIF is the day-to-day manager of all of the divisions and is the official liaison between the board of directors and the RIF divisions. In addition, the president travels to local projects and appears at events to provide publicity and support for the program. The responsibilities of each of the divisions reporting to the president are presented below:

Finance Division. The Finance Division performs basic accounting of RIF's finances and works with the Smithsonian Institution, the fiscal agent for RIF. As RIF's fiscal agent, the Smithsonian Institution processes all of RIF's deposits, checks, ledgers, and financial reports. In addition, the Smithsonian performs payroll duties, provides telephone service, and provides travel services to RIF. RIF's Finance Division instructs the Smithsonian on deposits and withdrawals. RIF's Finance Division also keeps purchase journals and performs manual accounting of RIF finances. When the Smithsonian Institution submits financial reports to RIF, RIF's Finance Division reconciles these reports to their own records to ensure that no recording errors exist. The Finance Division is also instrumental in the accomplishment of audits. It supports the completion of yearly Coopers and Lybrand audits as well as occasional audits by the Department of Education. The director of this division is responsible for overseeing the IBDP contract with the Department of Education.

⁶The duties performed by the divisions of the national office include some tasks that directly pertain to the IBDP and some that do not.

Systems, Computer, and Support Operations Division. The Systems, Computer, and Support Operations Division performs administrative functions on the behalf of the local projects. The division processes all book invoices and agreements with local projects, performs necessary data retrieval, and produces a program ledger for each project containing basic information (e.g., the name, project number, amount of funding) on the project. In 1991, approximately 25,000 book invoices were processed. Additionally, this division provides administrative support to the national office, such as managing the mail room, and tracking equipment and supply inventory.

Development Division. RIF's Development Division is primarily responsible for private sector fundraising. Additionally, the Development Division provides guidance and assistance to local project volunteers in their fundraising efforts, and works to make non-federally funded activities and services available to local projects.

Resource Coordination Division. The Resource Coordination Division is responsible for negotiating book discounts with book suppliers and monitoring the agreements signed between book suppliers and RIF. In addition, the division coordinates RIF's activities with other national organizations, such as the national PTA and the International Reading Association.

Programs Division. The Programs Division has three parts: program services, educational services, and technical publications. Program services is the largest part of the Programs Division and consists of 10 program specialists, who provide the technical assistance to the local RIF projects. Technical assistance consists of telephone contact, written correspondence, site visits, and meeting with local project volunteers. Seven of the 10 program specialists are each in charge of providing technical assistance to approximately 500 projects. (Specific duties and technical assistance responsibilities of program specialists are described in the section on technical assistance later in this chapter.) Three program specialists have duties in other areas of the Programs Division and, therefore, oversee fewer programs.

The two other parts of the Programs Division are educational services and technical publications. Educational services works with formal educational initiatives and foundation- or corporate-sponsored initiatives, coordinating the efforts of RIF with the efforts of other programs involved in such initiatives. One such initiative is the Running Start program, which is a combination of RIF and a 10-week "Reading Challenge" activity for first graders. Educational services also works with issues such as parent services, parent education, and family literacy. The third part of the Programs Division is technical publications, which produces documents, such as the RIF Handbook, used for technical assistance to the local projects.

Special Projects Division. The Special Projects Division coordinates all of the special events conducted by RIF. In addition to other events, this division is in charge of organizing the annual "Reading Is Fun Week." "Reading Is Fun Week," designated by RIF to celebrate reading for pleasure, has a theme created by the national office and is celebrated nationwide by those RIF projects choosing to participate. Additionally, the division provides assistance to local project volunteers on how to participate in the events.

In addition to its IBDP functions, the national office provides such activities as "Reading is Fun Week," paid for through private contributions and other non-federal revenue sources. These activities, although not functions of the IBDP and not federally funded, are provided to both federally as well as non-federally funded local projects.

SPECIFIC RIF FUNCTIONS

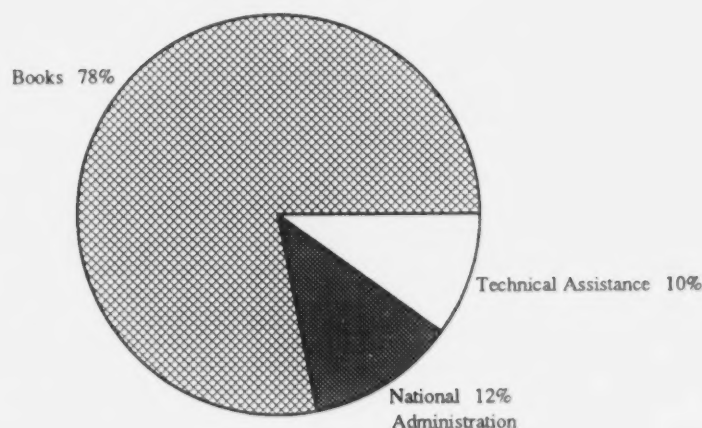
The FY 1990 appropriation for the IBDP was \$8,576,000.⁷ The uses of the FY 1990 appropriation can be shown in two ways -- by expenditure category, or by functional category. The first is shown in Table 4.

Table 4		
EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES FOR FY 1990 FEDERAL CONTRACT		
Expenditure Category	Funded Contract Amount	Percentage of Total
Books for Local Projects	\$6,720,477	78
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	1,261,163	15
Office Rent	194,152	2
Equipment, Consumable Supplies, Other Direct Costs	197,575	2
Travel	42,575	<1
Consultants	1,500	<1
Management Fees	88,358	.1
Smithsonian Institution Fees	70,200	1
TOTAL	8,576,000	100
Source: RIF Monthly Financial Report to the Department of Education of Individual Contract FY 90, August, 25, 1991.		

⁷RIF receives its appropriation award in June of each fiscal year, and generally uses its funds in the following fiscal year.

The second way of discussing RIF's use of federal funds is by its three functional categories of book costs for federally funded projects, national administration costs of the IBDP, and technical assistance to all projects (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Functional Categories



Total Federal Allocation (FY 1990): \$8,576,000

Following is a discussion of the activities undertaken for each of the functional categories: book costs, national administration costs, and technical assistance to local projects. The last section of this chapter describes RIF's reporting requirements to the Department of Education.

Book Costs

Seventy-eight percent of the FY 1990 federal funds allocated to RIF were spent on buying books to be distributed by the federally funded projects. Federal funds pay for 75 percent of the book costs for most federally funded projects. The exception is projects serving children of migrant farmworkers which have 100 percent of their book costs paid for with federal funds. All federally funded projects, except migrant projects, must raise the remaining 25 percent of their book costs from

other sources. And, for all projects, 100 percent of any other costs incurred by the project must be raised from non-federal sources.

National Administration Costs

In FY 1990, 12 percent of the federal funds allocated to the program were used for national administration costs relating to the IBDP. These costs include salaries,⁸ office rent, and supplies. The functions of the national office covered under national administration include approving organizations to run local projects, processing book invoices, and negotiating and monitoring agreements with book suppliers. These functions are discussed below.

Approval of Projects

In order to apply to become RIF projects, groups must write to the national office. The applicants receive a basic information packet and a proposal packet to be returned to the national office.⁹ The proposal packets ask for information about the nature of the organization (to ensure that it is a public agency or nonprofit group); a budget plan (including funding sources); and detailed information on the proposed project (the number and types of sites; the number of children to be served; plans for distributions and motivational activities; number of books to be distributed; number and types of volunteers, supporting agencies, and members of the book selection committee; and the organization's plans to involve parents in activities). Additionally, proposing organizations must provide information on the race, age, and percentage of disabled children served, as well as a description of the demographics of the community. (See Appendix B for a copy of the proposal.) However, proposals for federally funded projects do not include data on the income level of children served or any other indicators of special needs of the children served.

Currently, RIF does not have a structured system for approving new federally funded projects because no new projects are granted federal funding. The last time that RIF offered federal funding to new projects was approximately three years ago. Most of the projects that received federal funding

⁸Not included in national administration costs are employee salaries pertaining to technical assistance functions. Employee salaries pertaining to technical assistance are covered by the federal funds allocated to technical assistance.

⁹At the current time, because of funding limitations, no proposal packets for federal funding are sent to any programs inquiring about RIF.

were existing, non-federally funded RIF projects that had trouble raising enough funds to operate and serve needy children. To choose these projects, program specialists examined their files and selected the projects serving needy children to receive federal funding.¹⁰ Since that time, RIF has not offered federal funding to any new projects, and the projects receiving federal funding remain the same each year.

Agreements signed with the local projects remain in effect for one year. At the end of the contract year, the agreements are not automatically renewed. Established RIF projects must submit a renewal proposal to renew their agreement for the next year. The same information required in the original proposal is required in the renewal proposal.

Processing Book Invoices

The national office of RIF pays the federal share of the federally funded projects' book bills. Projects never receive federal funding in monetary form. Federally funded RIF projects order the books they have chosen for distribution and receive the books along with an invoice from the book company. The projects then send the invoice to the national office of RIF with a check made out to the book supplier for their local portion of the book costs. The national office of RIF processes and checks the invoice. If the invoice and the local share are correct, the national office of RIF sends the invoice to the book supplier along with the local project's check and a check for the federal share.

Negotiating Book Supplier Agreements

Another part of the national administration costs functional category is the negotiation of book supplier agreements. The IBDP requires that RIF negotiate agreements with book suppliers to enable local projects to purchase books at discounted prices. The IBDP law states that the negotiated discounts must be at least comparable with discounts given to similar programs receiving no federal funds. Since there are no similar book distribution programs, RIF compares its discounts to those given to schools. RIF also negotiates with book suppliers on the services that they provide to the local projects. At a minimum, RIF requires that suppliers extend a 90-day credit term to RIF projects and either guarantee current catalog prices or provide advance warning of price increases. Some book suppliers provide additional services, such as free shipping, to projects. RIF does not review or endorse any books sold by the companies. The local projects themselves must review the books sold by the book suppliers and decide whether those books are appropriate for the children served by that

¹⁰No formal criteria exist for choosing projects for funding; however, criteria are now being developed by RIF to implement the amendment to the IBDP, which requires that in funding additional federally funded projects, priority be given to those projects serving special populations.

project. RIF monitors its agreements with book suppliers by comparing the discount stated on projects' invoices to the discounts stated in the suppliers' agreements with RIF.

RIF provides the local projects with a list of book suppliers with which RIF has negotiated agreements. This list contains the amount of each company's discounts, the types of books they offer, and the services (such as free shipping or book storage) provided. In this list, the national office of RIF also supplies a categorical index of the types of literature that the suppliers and distributors offer. This index lists the names of those suppliers and distributors selling books in a certain category, such as literature with a certain ethnic focus (i.e., Hispanic or Afro-American) or certain types of books (i.e., adventure or biography). On the basis of the list of suppliers, index, and catalogs supplied by the book companies, the local project administrators choose the companies from which to order books.

Local projects have a large number of book suppliers to choose from. Currently, RIF has signed agreements with approximately 350 book suppliers. The amounts of discounts range from 0 percent¹¹ (11 book suppliers) to 80 percent (three book suppliers), but most of the companies offer discounts between 20 percent and 40 percent. The vast majority of book suppliers that have agreements with RIF place no restrictions on the types of books that may be ordered at the discounted price by the RIF projects, although some offer higher discounts for bulk orders or certain types of books.

Technical Assistance to Local Projects

Ten percent of FY 1990 IBDP appropriations were used for technical assistance, the third expenditure category. According to its contract with the Department of Education, RIF must provide technical assistance to all federally and non-federally funded local projects. Federal funds allocated to technical assistance are used for direct technical assistance, review of local project reports, and production of the RIF Handbook.

Although all divisions of RIF are involved in providing technical assistance to local projects, technical assistance is primarily conducted by staff of the Programs Division. Local projects are grouped into 10 regional areas; one program specialist from the Programs Division is assigned projects in each regional area.

¹¹Book suppliers offering a zero percent discount are those that supply specialized materials such as Braille books or audiocassettes.

Direct Technical Assistance

According to RIF's contract with the Department of Education, RIF must conduct a needs assessment of the local projects. RIF's formal needs assessment takes place yearly in October. To assess the needs of the local projects for the coming year, RIF's Programs Division conducts a staff meeting to discuss examples of programs running well or poorly, as noted from phone calls, site visits, or reports, and to share information on various sites. At this meeting, many of the projects to be visited that year are identified by program specialists, the director of the Programs Division, and the president of RIF. Problems or issues identified in this meeting guide the strategy of technical assistance for the year and determine the areas in which that year's technical assistance budget will be spent. Ongoing, informal needs assessments are also conducted throughout the year. As problems arise, the plans of the program specialists may change accordingly, and visits to additional projects may be planned.

Several means, other than the formal needs assessment, are used to identify projects requiring technical assistance, including the following:

- (1) The national office may receive a phone call from a project identifying a problem that the project has encountered.
- (2) Major discrepancies (e.g., dramatic changes in the numbers of children served) between the information documented in yearly proposals and the information documented in final reports may indicate a problem.
- (3) Program ledgers maintained by RIF on each project are examined every six to nine months for book expenditures. If, after several months, a project has spent an amount deemed to be too much or too little for the period of time, the national office of RIF has an indication that the project may have a problem.

Most of the time, program specialists provide technical assistance by telephone. However, program specialists also provide field technical assistance. As dictated by both the formal and informal need assessments, each of the program specialists makes three 1-week trips per year to states in his or her assigned region. On these trips, the specialists provide two types of field technical assistance: technical assistance meetings and site visits.

Technical assistance meetings are gatherings that include many local project representatives and are designed to disseminate technical information to the local projects. Technical assistance meetings are usually conducted in cities with heavy concentrations of RIF projects so that as many

projects can be included as possible. Subjects commonly discussed by the program specialists in technical assistance meetings include advice on fundraising, ideas for motivational activities, and ideas for including parents and local communities in project activities. At these meetings, the program specialists address problems and provide guidance to projects. A technical assistance meeting, in addition to fostering project contact with the program specialists, also allows an opportunity for project representatives to share information with other project representatives.

The other type of field technical assistance provided by program specialists is site visits. Projects chosen for site visits include not only those projects experiencing problems but also special projects that may not be experiencing problems, such as: very rural projects that may not have been able to attend a technical assistance meeting, projects receiving large sums of federal money, and projects serving at-risk groups of children. During the site visits, program specialists provide assistance in solving project problems or simply gain information about project operations.

Although some projects are not reached by the types of telephone and field technical assistance listed above, program specialists are in touch with each RIF project at least once a year. The program specialists contact each project to verify information when they receive its yearly renewal proposal. At this time, the program specialists also provide technical assistance, if necessary.

Review of Local Project Reports

The program specialists review all of the reports sent to the national office by the local projects to ensure that projects are adhering to RIF's requirements.¹² On the basis of these reports, the program specialists make options for renewal of project agreements with RIF. RIF requires two reports, in addition to the proposal (mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter), from its projects -- a Performance Report and a Distribution Report.

The Performance Report requests general information on the execution of the project and must be completed at the end of the project's agreement term. The Performance Report basically requests the same indicators as the proposal, but it requests the **actual** numbers of children served, books distributed, funds received, etc., for the past year. The Performance Report, like the project proposal, does not include data on the income level of the children served or other indicators of other special needs of the children served. The report asks for basic financial data from local projects, but does not request any detailed financial data. In this report, the local projects are also asked to report program

¹²RIF's requirements for local projects are discussed in Chapter 3.

results. The local projects are given considerable discretion in this section and are allowed to provide, in narrative form, indicators ranging from test scores to qualitative measures of parental involvement.

The Distribution Report must be completed by each project for each book distribution taking place. RIF uses these reports to monitor the exact number of books given at each distribution and the number of children served by these distributions. The report asks for basic information on the distributions: the type of site at which the distribution took place; the number of children participating; the age or grade range of the children; the number of available books; the number of titles from which the children could choose; and the number of books distributed.

The RIF Handbook

The national office of RIF also circulates the technical assistance document, *The RIF Handbook: How to Run a Successful Reading Is Fundamental Project* to each of its local projects. This 143-page handbook provides written information on:

- (1) the background of RIF;
- (2) planning a RIF program;
- (3) completing and sending in RIF proposals;
- (4) selecting books;
- (5) ordering books;
- (6) requesting technical assistance from the national office;
- (7) tips for specific types of projects;
- (8) accounting procedures;
- (9) creating motivational activities;
- (10) fundraising; and
- (11) recommended ways to publicize local projects in order to attract volunteer services and funds.

Reporting to U.S. Department of Education

The Department of Education requires several periodic reports from RIF: monthly financial reports; monthly reports; quarterly reports; and a final report. RIF compiles the data from reports and proposals received from the local projects and also from the financial records of the national office.

In its monthly financial report to the Department of Education, RIF is required to show monthly expenditures in the specific expenditure categories that are included in the contract budget. The expenditures in the report are displayed by budget categories and by salaries of division directors and all other personnel. Additionally, the report displays the cumulative federal expenditures since the start of the contract year for each of the categories.

The monthly report relates the activities conducted within the previous month and describes activities planned for the following month. This report also includes data on the RIF national administration: the amount of time spent on the contract by RIF staff; the number of projects signing agreements or renewal agreements within the previous month; and the number of discount agreements concluded with book publishers and distributors during the previous month. In addition, the report includes local project data: the number of children participating in the RIF program for local projects signing agreements during the previous month, and the number of books to be distributed by local projects signing agreements during the previous month.

The quarterly report required from RIF is similar to the monthly report, but expands on several items. On the national administration level, the quarterly report contains the amount of federal monies awarded to local RIF projects in that quarter; the names of the book suppliers with which RIF negotiated agreements within that quarter and the amounts of their discounts; and any information available to RIF on the extent to which children are being motivated to read. The data provided as the evidence of reading motivation are primarily anecdotal excerpts from the local projects' Performance Reports. On the local project level, the report lists the names and addresses of the local projects; the proportions of the children served by the local RIF projects by age, race, and disability status; the number of organizations signing agreements by type of organization; and the number of volunteers by type of volunteer (e.g., parent, teacher). This project-level information is provided only for local projects renewing agreements within the quarter.

A final report is required at the end of the contract period that discusses the achievements of the program throughout the duration of the contract.

3. LOCAL RIF PROJECTS

This chapter presents the characteristics of local RIF projects nationwide, as well as project operations and administrative practices of selected local RIF projects. RIF projects nationwide are described in terms of number and types of projects; types of sites; types of sponsoring organizations; types of volunteers; and proportions of children served by age, racial/ethnic category, and disability status. The project operations and local administrative practices of selected RIF projects address project administration, types of book selection committees, and examples of motivational activities. This chapter concludes with comments on the differences between federally and non-federally funded projects. Before beginning, however, a brief discussion of RIF's requirements for local projects is presented.

LOCAL PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Any nonprofit group or any public agency (e.g., a school or library) is eligible to sponsor a local RIF project. Local projects must serve groups of young people age three through high school. The local RIF projects must adhere to several requirements including:

- **Federally funded RIF projects must raise part of their projects' costs.** Federally funded projects must locally raise 25 percent of their book costs and 100 percent of other costs, such as administrative costs or the costs of motivational activities.
- **Projects must conduct the minimum number of book distributions required by RIF.** For projects serving children only during the school year, the minimum requirement is three separate distributions. Each child must receive at least one book at each distribution. Projects that operate only during the summer months must distribute at least one book per child at each of two distributions. Projects that serve children all year long are required to distribute a total of at least five books per child at three distributions. An exception is made for migrant projects, which are required to distribute one book per child at each of only two distributions.
- **RIF projects must conduct reading motivation activities.** All projects must provide activities, before and after the book distributions, that are intended to inspire the children to read for pleasure.

- **Projects must make an attempt to involve parents in activities.** At a minimum, the projects must inform parents of the activities of the projects and of the RIF program. The national office of RIF suggests several means of informing parents: letters, bulletins, and advertisements in the media. In addition, RIF projects must try to involve parents in activities. To do so, the national office of RIF suggests that projects invite parents to activities and try to enlist parents as volunteers for the projects.
- **Projects must create a book selection committee to select the books to be distributed.** The only requirement for the book selection committees is that each must have a minimum of three members. The national office of RIF suggests that the committee for each project be composed of a group of people representing different viewpoints of the community. Although RIF requires the committee to be formed, it does not place any requirements on the books to be chosen or the criteria used in choosing the books.
- **The projects are required to serve all children equally.** In their proposals to the national office of RIF, the projects identify the groups that they will serve. Under current RIF policy, RIF requires all of the children within the group chosen by the project to be served equally. For instance, if a project proposes to serve a fourth grade classroom, it must serve all students in that classroom. The exceptions to this RIF requirement are groups that have been previously targeted through another program. For instance, a RIF project is allowed to serve only a Chapter 1 class in a school, since Chapter 1 had previously identified and grouped the children in that class.
- **Local projects must distribute different types of books.** At each distribution, projects must offer books with differing subjects and differing levels of difficulty. RIF places no requirements, however, on the number of different subjects projects must offer.
- **Local projects must adhere to price constraints.** The maximum a project can pay for a book is \$5.00, including the RIF discount given by the book supplier. A higher limit is afforded to projects that are buying special types of materials for children with disabilities, such as audiotapes, records, and Braille books.
- **RIF projects are required to order the books for their distributions from book suppliers that have signed agreements with RIF.** The national office of RIF sends each project a list of book suppliers that have signed agreements with RIF, the types of books they sell, and the amounts of their discounts. From this list of approximately 350 book suppliers, the projects may choose their own suppliers. Although RIF

has signed agreements with the suppliers on the list, RIF does not assess the quality of the books they sell. The projects themselves must determine the appropriateness and quality of the books that suppliers offer.

- **Projects are required to adhere to RIF's rules to order and pay for books.** Federally funded projects must order their books, receive the invoice, and fill out an invoice verification form for the national office of RIF. Then, the federally funded projects send the invoice, the invoice verification form, and their local portion of the book costs to the national office of RIF to have the national office of RIF provide the federal matching share of the book costs.
- **Local projects are required to send two types of reports and a renewal proposal annually.** Federally funded projects must send the national office of RIF a Distribution Report following each distribution. Additionally, at the end of the year, the federally funded projects must send the national office of RIF a Performance Report detailing the overall success of the project in the past year. At the end of each project's subcontract year, the projects must send a renewal proposal to the national office of RIF.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL RIF PROJECTS¹³

In 1990, there were 3,991 local projects, both federally and non-federally funded, operated by 121,895 volunteers throughout the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These local projects distributed 8,750,132 books to 2,728,554 children at 12,667 sites.

In FY 1991, IBDP-funded RIF projects totalled 2,939 of the reported 3,991 total RIF projects. These projects were supported by 8,536 groups varying in type. The projects operated at 10,513 of the total 12,667 sites. In FY 1991, the federally funded projects served 2,351,101 children with 7,577,437 books. Thus, federally funded projects composed nearly 74 percent of the total number of projects, bought 87 percent of the books distributed to all projects, and served 86 percent of the children participating in all RIF projects.

¹³The figures presented in the tables in this section differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.

The types of organizations that administered the majority of the federally funded projects in FY 1991 were schools or districts. Administering organizations propose the creation of a project and take responsibility for the project's administration. Two other types of organizations, PTOs (Parent-Teacher Organizations)/PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations) and service groups, also composed a large number of the groups administering RIF projects. Table 5 shows, by type of organization, the groups administering federally funded projects.

Table 5 ORGANIZATIONS ADMINISTERING LOCAL PROJECTS (PERCENTAGE) FY 1991 Total = 2,939	
Schools/Districts	57
PTA/PTO	23
Service Groups	11
Library Associations	3
State Agencies	1
Day Care Centers	1
Federal Programs	<1
Corporations/Foundations	<1
Business Charities	<1
Other Groups	4
Source: Updated, Final RIF Quarterly Reports: October 1, 1990 to September 30, 1991. Note: The figures presented in this table differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.	

The majority of organizations supporting federally funded RIF projects in FY 1991 were PTAs or PTOs. Supporting organizations are those that do not actually run the project but provide support for the project, such as publicity, monetary donations, support in fundraising efforts, or donations of services. A total of 8,536 organizations supported federally funded RIF projects in FY 1991. Table 6 shows a breakdown of the types of supporting organizations.

Table 6	
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS (PERCENTAGE) FY 1991	
Total = 8,536	
PTA/PTO	51
Schools/Districts	15
Service Groups	12
Business Charities	10
Corporations/Foundations	1
Library Associations	1
State Agencies	<1
Federal Programs	<1
Day Care Centers	<1
Other Organizations	9
Source: Updated, Final RIF Quarterly Reports: October 1, 1990 to September 30, 1991.	
Note: The figures presented in this table differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.	

The roughly three-to-one ratio of the 8,536 supporting organizations to the 2,939 administering organizations is an indication of the level of coordination and joint activity among organizations within the community.

In FY 1991, the 2,939 federally funded projects conducted distributions at 10,513 sites. The vast majority (88%) of the distributions took place in schools. Table 7 shows the proportions of the different types of sites at which federally funded projects conducted their distributions.

Table 7	
TYPES OF SITES (PERCENTAGE) FY 1991	
Total = 10,513	
Schools	88
Day Care Centers	3
Libraries	2
Recreation/Community Centers	1
Other Locations	6
Source: Updated, Final RIF Quarterly Reports: October 1, 1990 to September 30, 1991.	
Note: The figures presented in this table differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.	

In FY 1991, there were 100,535 volunteers for federally funded RIF projects.¹⁴ The two most prevalent types of volunteers were parents and teachers. Table 8 provides the proportions of volunteers serving federally funded RIF projects, by type of volunteer.

Table 8	
VOLUNTEERS* (PERCENTAGE) FY 1991	
Total = 100,535	
Parents	36
Teachers	32
Representatives of the Proposing Organization	9
Librarians	6
Other Volunteers	16
Source: Updated, Final RIF Quarterly Reports: October 1, 1990 to September 30, 1991.	
* Paid staff composed less than 1 percent of total local project staff.	
Note: The figures presented in this table differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.	

¹⁴The costs of this volunteer labor are unquantifiable since RIF volunteers are drawn from a variety of professions.

Table 9 shows the proportion of children served by federally funded projects by age and disability status. The children served by federally funded projects in FY 1991 were primarily age six through eleven (72%). Three percent of the children served by those projects were disabled.

Table 9	
CHILDREN SERVED BY RIF PROJECTS BY AGE AND DISABILITY STATUS (PERCENTAGE) FY 1991	
Age 3-5	12
Age 6-11	72
Age 12-14	12
Age 15-high school	4
Children with disabilities	3
Source: Calculation of project data recorded by RIF for the period October 1, 1990 to September 30, 1991.	
Note: The figures presented in this table differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.	

Table 10 shows the racial/ethnic proportions of children served by federally funded RIF projects in FY 1991. Fifty-six percent of the children served were white, and 44 percent were minority. Compared to the national percentages, also shown in Table 10, federally funded RIF projects serve a greater proportion of minority children than is found in the school-aged population.

Table 10 CHILDREN SERVED BY RIF PROJECTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY FY 1991		
Racial/Ethnic Category	Percentage Served by Federally Funded RIF Projects	Percentage of National School-Age Population
White	56	71
Black	22	15
Hispanic	16	10
Asian American	3	3
American Indian	2	<1
Other	<1	NA
Sources: Calculation of project data recorded by RIF for the period October 1, 1990 to September 30, 1991. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 1988 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey, Projected Enrollment Data for the Nation. Note: The figures presented in this table differ from those in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. For an explanation of this difference, see Appendix C.		

Table 11 shows the state-by-state breakdown of the number of children served by federally funded RIF projects. This table shows that over half (1,220,346) of all children served by federally funded RIF projects are served in eight states: California, Texas, Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, Illinois, Florida, and Wisconsin.

Table 11

Children Served by Federally Funded RIF Projects
Compared to School Age Population a/

State	Number of Children Served by RIF Projects b/	School Age Population Age 5-17 Years c/	Percent of School Age Population Served by RIF
Alabama	15,806	811,000	2
Alaska	14,271	110,000	13
Arizona	21,419	671,000	3
Arkansas	27,371	476,000	6
California	254,020	5,225,000	5
Colorado	40,416	602,000	7
Connecticut	31,097	532,000	6
Delaware	3,984	119,000	3
District of Columbia	61,911	91,000	68
Florida	83,727	1,985,000	4
Georgia	12,543	1,286,000	1
Hawaii	7,656	199,000	4
Idaho	4,084	225,000	2
Illinois	102,254	2,116,000	5
Indiana	43,356	1,065,000	4
Iowa	38,930	519,000	8
Kansas	42,658	468,000	9
Kentucky	29,999	716,000	4
Louisiana	21,585	911,000	2
Maine	17,098	220,000	8
Maryland	16,689	803,000	2
Massachusetts	42,422	924,000	5
Michigan	135,127	1,761,000	8
Minnesota	19,249	801,000	2
Mississippi	13,068	566,000	2
Missouri	59,151	936,000	6
Montana	4,946	158,000	3
Nebraska	2,587	305,000	1
Nevada	2,338	191,000	1
New Hampshire	9,793	195,000	5
New Jersey	65,170	1,286,000	5
New Mexico	33,514	320,000	10
New York	142,553	3,044,000	5
North Carolina	47,201	1,179,000	4
North Dakota	8,865	129,000	7
Ohio	49,845	2,036,000	2
Oklahoma	23,879	619,000	4
Oregon	13,387	503,000	3
Pennsylvania	174,707	2,039,000	9
Rhode Island	24,520	162,000	15
South Carolina	26,427	690,000	4
South Dakota	5,309	140,000	4
Tennessee	58,357	915,000	6
Texas	247,127	3,474,000	7
Utah	7,140	456,000	2
Vermont	15,681	101,000	16
Virginia	76,169	1,039,000	7
Washington	36,701	859,000	4
West Virginia	18,242	353,000	5
Wisconsin	80,831	899,000	9
Wyoming	5,404	100,000	5
U.S. Total	2,340,584	45,330,000	5

a/ School age data population data not available for Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands

b/ Data for FY 1991.

c/ Data for FY 1989.

Sources: Calculation of project data recorded by RIF for the period 10/01/90 to 09/30/91.

Council of Chief State School Officers, "State Education Indicators: 1990," Table 2.

This breakdown also shows that 5 percent of the school-age population in the United States is served by federally funded RIF projects. The highest percentage of the school-age population served by RIF projects occurs in the District of Columbia (68%), where the first local projects originated. Although the proportion of school-age children served by federally funded RIF projects in the District of Columbia is high, the number of children from District of Columbia served by federally funded projects compose only 3 percent of the total number served throughout the nation.

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES OF LOCAL PROJECTS

A small number of local projects were selected to allow an examination of different aspects of their administrative practices. These 11 projects, while not nationally representative of all 3,991 local projects, were selected along a variety of dimensions -- number of distribution sites, geographic region, socioeconomic background of the children, and federally funded (nine projects) versus non-federally funded (two projects). Information was gathered primarily through telephone interviews and, for two projects, through on-site visits. Different questions were asked of the personnel for each project depending on each project's characteristics.

From the interviews and visits, it was observed that the local projects exhibited diverse administrative practices in terms of overall project administration, book selection committee processes, and motivational activities.

Overall Project Administration

The local RIF projects interviewed for this report ranged from one to fifty-six sites. Projects with one or two sites exhibited one basic pattern of administration, while multi-site projects exhibited several types of administration. Each one- or two-site project examined had a project coordinator who organized the activities of the project and enlisted the support of volunteers. Each one- and two-site project had a single book selection committee, the members of which were usually recruited by the project coordinator.

Multi-site RIF projects add a middle level of management to the Reading Is Fundamental structure. In single-site projects, the two levels of RIF are the national level and the project level. However, in multi-site projects a third level of RIF, the site level, is added after the project level. Therefore, the project level becomes the mid-level management in multi-site projects. Currently, approximately 350 of all 3,991 RIF projects operate at more than six sites and are considered multi-

site. Of the projects examined, four were multi-site projects and all four were federally funded. Of the four projects, one had 16 sites, one had 25 sites, one had 29 sites, and one had 56 sites.

All multi-site projects are required by RIF to have each site complete a distribution report and send it to the project office. The project then sends one multi-site distribution report that compiles all of the information provided in each site's distribution report to the national office of RIF. Two of the multi-site projects interviewed also required applications for participation in the program. In addition, one of these required a final report for each site, while the other required its sites to sign a contract with the project before participating in the program. These two projects provided fairly strict control over their sites. The national office of RIF requires all multi-site projects to designate a site coordinator or contact at each of the sites served. In addition, in two of the multi-site projects interviewed, area coordinators were also designated. The project sites were grouped into areas containing small numbers of sites. Area coordinators were in charge of overseeing the sites in their areas. The area coordinators enable the projects to have more oversight over their sites. The national office of RIF does not require the designation of area coordinators; it is left to each project's discretion.

The multi-site projects examined for this evaluation also exhibited other differences in project administration, especially in the processes of selecting, ordering, and paying for books. The 16-site project had one book selection committee for all of the sites. The books for the project were ordered for all the sites at once from the project office. A variation on this type of project administration was exhibited by the 25-site project, which had three different book selection committees, each in charge of selecting books for a different age group of children. One was in charge of selecting books for all of those sites that served children Pre-K through second grade. An intermediate book selection committee selected books for those sites that served fourth and sixth graders. The third, the secondary book selection committee, selected books for the sites that served grades seven through twelve. The book selection and ordering for all of the sites, however, were still completed at the project level. The 56-site project, on the other hand, allowed each of its sites to assemble its own book selection committee. To order their books, representatives from each site's book selection committee attended a meeting with representatives from all other sites in the project. At this meeting, the site representatives placed their orders for books and gave a check to the project administrators for the local matching share. The 29-site project also allowed each of its sites to create its own book selection committee; however, the sites were also required to order their books on their own.

Although the project coordinators assisted the sites through preparatory meetings, the 29-site project did not require that all of the sites order their books at the same time.

Book Selection Committees

As mentioned above, the multi-site projects examined used different means of creating book selection committees. All projects examined had book selection committees composed of different types of people and employed different criteria for choosing the books to distribute.

The book selection committees of the projects examined varied in size and composition from project to project. One project serving 1,731 students at 16 sites had a single book selection committee of seven people, while a single-site program, that served 420 students, had a book selection committee composed of 14 members. In the majority of the federally funded projects examined for this evaluation, parents were members of the book selection committees. Other members of the committees were, for the most part, librarians, reading specialists, and school administrators. One project's book selection committee was composed completely of members of the proposing organization, a service group. Other projects also included representatives from their sponsoring organizations on their book selection committees. One multi-site project included students as members of many of its book selection committees.

The criteria used by the book selection committees of the projects examined have some common elements but vary according to the community and population served by the projects. Most of the projects examined relied on the judgment of the book selection committee members, in addition to other factors. Other common factors considered were student preferences, teachers' requests, reading levels of the students served, and the prices of books. In several of the projects examined, the selection committees placed a high emphasis on selecting books in foreign languages and books with culturally sensitive themes to correspond to the ethnic populations they served. An example of this is described in Vignette 1.

Vignette 1:

Project #1 was a federally funded project operated by a daycare/preschool center located in an innercity area of a large city. The center served 88 children, ranging from two years old through kindergarten. Although the center is open to children of any background, the mission of the center is to serve primarily low-income, Hispanic children. The approximate racial/ethnic breakdown of the children served by the RIF project was 94 percent Hispanic, 4 percent white, 1 percent American Indian, and 1 percent black. Ninety percent of the children served by the project received federal subsidies to pay for tuition. Approximately 50 percent of the children served had parents who were illiterate in English as well as in their native language.

The center's RIF book selection committee was composed of nine people, including parents, teachers and administrators of the center, students of various universities in the area, and teachers from other schools in the area. The committee attempted to select books for the distributions that were:

- 1) **Developmentally appropriate:** suitable for the reading levels of the students, and having short words in large type to make it easier for both students and their parents to enjoy the books;
- 2) **Culturally sensitive:** pertaining to the Hispanic culture and/or written in Spanish; and
- 3) **Multi-cultural:** addressing different cultures, such as Afro-American or Anglo-American, to expose the children to cultures different from their own.

Motivational Activities

Motivational activities conducted by the local projects examined for this evaluation varied from elaborate costume parties to the distribution of bookmarks.

At one project, the children read Maurice Sendak's book *Where the Wild Things Are* before the distribution. At the distribution, the children and the volunteers dressed up as "Wild Things" and participated in a "Wild Rumpus."

One project examined integrated its motivational activities with current community issues. This project's community had a current emphasis on recycling, so many of the books chosen for the distribution had recycling or environmental subjects. As the motivational activity, the children were asked to wear an item that reminded them of recycling (such as a necklace made of aluminum cans) to the book distribution.

Another project involved parents or other community members in carrying out a central theme. One of the project's book distributions had an Early American theme, and many of the books for the distribution had subjects concerning Early America. As the motivational activity, parents were invited to attend the distribution and bring any items they owned that were Early American antiques or relevant to the Early American theme. For another distribution, the same project had a farm theme. Again, the subjects of the books for the distribution mirrored the theme. Most of the parents of the children served by the project were farmworkers. Many parents brought small animals to the distribution and instructed the children on how to care for the animals. Other projects examined enlisted local celebrities or well-known figures to visit the book distributions to promote reading.

One project coordinated its activities with the activities of other reading programs. The local RIF project used the activities of other programs as motivational activities for the project's distributions, while it provided a source of books for the programs (see Vignette 2). As noted earlier, the three-to-one ratio of supporting organizations to administering organizations indicates coordination and joint activities among organizations within the community.

Vignette 2:

Project #2 was a federally funded project operated in a major city by a school district encompassing three communities: a primarily low-income, black community; a primarily Hispanic community; and a community inhabited largely by young urban professionals interspersed with low-income housing projects. The project had 29 sites and served 8,000 students ranging in grade level from pre-kindergarten through ninth grade. Overall, the project served 65 percent black children, 31 percent Hispanic, 3 percent white, and 1 percent Asian American. Eighty-five percent of the students served by the RIF project received Chapter 1 services.

Many of the sites in the RIF project coordinated their activities with other reading programs that involve parents. The sites used the activities of the other reading programs for their motivational activities, while providing a source of books for the other programs. For instance, some sites in the project joined the **Books and Beyond** program with RIF distributions. **Books and Beyond** is a program supported by a corporate grant that involves parents along with their children in reading. Parents are asked to fill out and sign forms charting how much time their children spend reading and how many books their children read. The children bring these forms back to school, and the school then charts the progress of all of the students in a conspicuous place. Other sites in the project have tied their RIF activities with other established programs similar to **Books and Beyond**, such as **Parents As Reading Partners (PARP)**. Additionally, two schools created "Read Around the Clock," an overnight activity that parents and their children attend together. Reading is the main focus of "Read Around the Clock," and storytellers and group readings highlight the evening.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FEDERALLY AND NON-FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

Nationally, the average number of sites per project is 3.6 for federally funded projects and 2.0 for non-federally funded projects. Additionally, federally funded projects distribute an average of 2,578 books to an average of 800 children per project, while non-federally funded projects distribute an average of 1,115 books to an average of 359 children per project. In comparing federally funded projects to non-federally funded projects, the federally funded projects (part of the IBDP) on the average have more sites per project than non-federally funded projects, and the federally funded projects tend to be larger, in terms of number of children served and number of books distributed, than

non-federally funded programs. However, from the projects examined, no other differences between the non-federally funded projects and the federally funded projects were observed.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND OPTIONS

The Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (IBDP) is a federal program designed to motivate reading in children from age three through high school. RIF is the vehicle through which IBDP funds are used to purchase and distribute books. RIF operates as a unique program; there are no comparable book distribution programs similar in scale and content.

RIF consists of a national organization and local projects. The national office of RIF is responsible for disbursing federal funds; providing services to the local projects, including technical assistance and organization of special events; and monitoring local projects. The national office is also responsible for raising funds to supplement IBDP funds. In FY 1990, private grants and contributions constituted 16 percent of RIF's total revenues, and supported such national activities as "Reading is Fun" week as well as some local projects.

The options presented in this chapter build on an existing and stable programmatic foundation. At the local level, volunteers distribute books and conduct motivational activities. In FY 1991, over 7.5 million books were distributed through the IBDP to more than 2.3 million young people in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. RIF's use of volunteers as project staff is a low-cost method of administration. The potential cost of hiring the over 100,000 project personnel represents added value to the program. Additionally, most local RIF book distributions are conducted in schools where opportunities for coordination of resources and staff are numerous.

Two overarching factors have implications for the RIF program in the future. First, it is the policy of RIF to continue funding the proposals of existing federally funded projects, without regard to the financial status of the projects, as long as the projects' renewal proposals are acceptable. (The renewal rate for federally funded projects is 99 percent.) In 1990, one thousand groups applied for federal funding and were turned down due to a lack of federal funds available to start additional projects. RIF currently does not send federal proposal packets to groups requesting information on the program because federal funds are not available to start additional projects. The absence of any review of the financial status of existing federally funded projects and the existence of a waiting list suggest that the Department of Education may want to consider certain options with respect to the methods used to distribute federal funds to local RIF projects. The second factor affecting the Department of Education's oversight of the RIF program is the National Literacy Act of 1991. The

National Literacy Act of 1991 amends the IBDP legislation and stipulates that, in funding additional projects, RIF give priority to those projects that provide services to special populations, including low-income children and other children with special needs.

The options presented in this chapter focus on alternative ways to allocate federal funds to local RIF projects. Option 1 relates to developing the self-sufficiency of local RIF projects so that federal funds could be made available to new projects, and Option 2 relates to the targeting of federal funds to ensure that RIF projects serve those most in need. If the Department decides to pursue either of these or other options, there are several factors that might also be considered. These factors relate to reporting requirements and technical assistance, and are presented following the presentation of the options.

Option 1: Require RIF to make the development of financial self-sufficiency of local RIF projects an immediate priority.

Making the development of self-sufficiency among many of the current, federally funded projects an immediate priority would open up federal funding for additional projects. RIF's existing strategies for achieving local project independence, as described in their contract proposal, include informing the public about the RIF program and its activities, creating relationships between RIF and other national organizations, and coordinating RIF's activities with non-federal groups. Renewal proposals sent to the national office of RIF currently require local projects to specify the amounts of the local matched and unmatched share; the source of the local matched share; and the names of organizations donating funds, volunteers, or services. Existing technical assistance strategies and current reporting by projects on their financial status could be augmented to develop the financial independence of local RIF projects.

To assess the financial stability of local projects, the national office of RIF would need to collect additional financial data, including a more detailed description of the fundraising activities undertaken by the local projects and any partnerships that the local projects have with local businesses or organizations. On the basis of these financial data, the national office of RIF would need to analyze at least three years of financial data to assess the stability of the non-federal sources of revenue for the projects. For those projects considered by the national office to be potentially self-supporting, federal funding could be discontinued at the end of a three- to five-year period. This period would allow projects time to strengthen their financial base and to become completely

independent of federal funds. Additional projects would be notified of this policy before signing their agreements with the national office of RIF.

Option 2: Require RIF to distribute federal funds to only those local RIF projects serving children least likely to have access to books.

Some local RIF projects may currently serve children for whom the RIF books are supplements to their personal library as well as those for whom RIF is their only avenue to book ownership. Implementing Option 2 would ensure that federal funds flow toward those children most likely to benefit from participation in RIF (i.e., those children least likely to have access to books). The difficulty associated with pursuing this option, however, is the definition and identification of children least likely to have access to books. An income-based definition could be used (e.g., the relative percentage of children in the local area eligible for subsidized lunches); however, barriers to book ownership are not exclusively income-based. Implementing this option would require the development of a systematic method for deciding which projects merit federal funding. The special needs populations specified in the National Literacy Act of 1991 could be a useful starting point for developing the system.

Should the Department of Education choose either of the above options, or any other method of re-allocating federal funds, the data currently requested in RIF local project proposals would need to be supplemented to include information on the income level and special needs of the populations to be served. RIF would need full governmental authority to request such information both at proposal time and during the period in which the project receives federal funds. An example of the kinds of information to be collected can be found in the Population Data Sheet (see Appendix D) developed by RIF, which requests that local projects voluntarily report the categories of special needs children they serve. It is also important to note that the volunteer nature of the projects poses complications with increased data collection. Increased data collection necessitates increased volunteer time devoted to paperwork. Volunteers represent various backgrounds and professions. In some cases, volunteers may not readily know how or where to locate the required income or other data. Additionally, non-federal sources of funding of local projects may fluctuate greatly from year to year since many projects rely on fundraisers such as car washes, bake sales, and T-shirt sales for their matching funds. It is difficult to predict the revenue that could accrue from such events or the stability of private donations from

year to year. The collection of the supplemental data would also require increased administrative effort on the part of RIF's national office.

Because of these complications the Department of Education may want to consider requiring RIF to strengthen its technical assistance capacities in order to implement the above options. In addition to their current responsibilities, technical assistance staff would need to be able to provide local projects guidance on developing self-sufficiency and collecting the data on the populations they serve. As an example of such guidance, the national office of RIF would need to inform the volunteers of standard means of assessing the special needs of the populations that are served by the projects. Additionally, the RIF Handbook would need to be modified to provide guidance in these areas. An examination of the staffing and computer needs arising from the implementation of the options should also be considered.

REFERENCES

Ball, Diane A. *RIF + USSR = READ*, 1981.

General Research Corporation, *An Evaluation of the Right to Read Inexpensive Book Distribution Program*, Final Report, October, 1980.

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APPENDIX A

IBDP LAW AND AMENDMENT

IBDP LAW

Sec. 1563

ESEA OF 1965

SEC. 1563. INEXPENSIVE BOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM FOR READING MOTIVATION.

(a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The Secretary is authorized (1) to enter into a contract with Reading is Fundamental (RIF) (hereinafter in this section referred to as the "contractor"), a private nonprofit organization which has as its primary purpose the motivation of children to learn to read, to support and promote the establishment of reading motivation programs which include the distribution of inexpensive books to students, and (2) to pay the Federal share of the cost of such programs.

(b) **REQUIREMENTS OF CONTRACT.**—The contract shall provide that—

(1) the contractor will enter into subcontracts with local private nonprofit groups or organizations or with public agencies (hereinafter referred to as "subcontractors") under which the subcontractors will agree to establish, operate, and provide the non-Federal share of the cost of reading motivational programs which include the distribution of books by gift or loan, to pre-school and elementary and secondary school children;

(2) funds made available by the Secretary to a contractor pursuant to any contract entered into under this section will be used to pay the Federal share of the cost of establishing and operating reading motivational programs as provided in paragraph (1); and

(3) the contractor will meet such other conditions and standards as the Secretary determines to be necessary to assure the effectiveness of the programs authorized by this section and will provide such technical assistance as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

(c) **RESTRICTION ON PAYMENTS.**—The Secretary shall make no payment of the Federal share of the cost of acquiring and distributing books pursuant to a contract authorized by this section unless the Secretary determines that the contractor or subcontractor, as the case may be, has made arrangements with book publishers or distributors to obtain books at discounts at least as favorable as discounts that are customarily given by such publisher or distributor for book purchases made under similar circumstances in the absence of Federal assistance.

(d) **DEFINITIONS.**—For purposes of this section the term "Federal share" means—

(1) with respect to the cost of books purchased by a subcontractor for a program in a locality for distribution of such books to children in that locality, 75 percent of the cost to such subcontractor; or

(2) with respect to the cost of books purchased by a subcontractor for a program of distribution of books to children of migrant or seasonal farmworkers, 100 percent of the cost to such subcontractor for such books.

(20 U.S.C. 2963)

THE NATIONAL LITERACY ACT OF 1991

AMENDMENT TO THE IBDP

PUBLIC LAW 102-73—JULY 25, 1991

105 STAT. 355

SEC. 501. INEXPENSIVE BOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM.

(a) PRIORITY.—Section 1563(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 2963) is amended by—

- (1) striking “and” at the end of paragraph (2);
- (2) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4); and
- (3) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) in the fiscal year 1991 and each succeeding fiscal year, the contractor will give priority in the selection of additional local programs to programs and projects which serve children and students with special needs including, at a minimum—

Children and youth.

“(A) low-income children (particularly such children in high poverty areas);

“(B) children at risk for school failure;

“(C) children with disabilities;

“(D) emotionally disturbed children;

“(E) foster children;

“(F) homeless children;

“(G) migrant children;

“(H) children without access to libraries;

“(I) institutionalized or incarcerated children; and

“(J) children whose parents are institutionalized or incarcerated; and”.

(b) STUDY.—The contractor shall report to the Secretary of Education annually regarding the number and description of the additional programs funded under subsection 1563(a)(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

20 USC 2963
note.

APPENDIX B

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL, INC.
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
ROOM 500
600 MARYLAND AVENUE, S.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20024
202 287-3220



READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

INEXPENSIVE BOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM PROGRAM RENEWAL PROPOSAL

This proposal form is to be completed by groups applying to Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. for authorization to operate a RIF program with RIF Federal Matching Funds. Please type or print in ink and send the original and one copy to Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.

This space is
for information
about the group,
not the person
completing the
proposal.

1. _____
Name of organization or agency

Address

City State Zip

Telephone Number

This organization is:

- _____ a private nonprofit group (PTA's, etc.)
_____ a public agency (Schools, Libraries, etc.)

All RIF materials
will be mailed to
this address.

2. Name of the contact person (someone who can answer questions about this proposal and handle other business with RIF.)

Name of contact person

Address

City State Zip

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Work Telephone

Home Telephone

B-1

3. FUNDING INFORMATION: FEDERAL MATCHING FUNDS FOR BOOKS.

Your project is eligible for refunding at the amounts shown below, provided all of last year's funds were spent. If all of last year's funds were not spent, refer to Item 3 of the enclosed letter for instructions.

a. LOCAL SHARE (25%): \$ _____

b. RIF FEDERAL SHARE (75%): \$ _____

c. TOTAL AMOUNT (100%) (a+b): \$ _____

d. ADDITIONAL LOCAL FUNDS * : \$ _____
(See explanation below)

e. TOTAL BOOK BUDGET: (a+b+d) \$ _____

* RIF will not be able to match your additional local funds but the RIF discounts will still apply. Additional local funds may be used to buy higher priced books, to serve more children, or to give more books to each child.

f. How much of your local (25%) matching share (Item 3a.) is available at this time? \$ _____

g. What is the source of your local (25%) matching share?

4. OTHER EXPENSES

a. Do you plan to spend unmatched local funds on other expenses such as supplies or services?

YES ☐ NO ☐ Approximate Amount: \$ _____

d. Do you plan to spend unmatched local funds on staff salaries?

YES ☐ NO ☐ Approximate Amount: \$ _____

5. Using the chart provided, indicate the type of site(s) where distributions will be held (school, public library, park, recreation or day care center, etc.), the number of children served in each period of operation and the grade(s) or age(s) of the children served. Keep in mind that only those RIF programs that distribute books to the same children for an entire 12 month year (including the summer) are considered year-round programs.

Type of Site	Number of Sites	Number of Children served during the:			Grades or Ages*
		Summer Operation	School-Year Operation	Year-Round Operation	

TOTAL SITES:

TOTAL CHILDREN:

* It is not necessary to serve a whole school, club, center, etc. If your resources are limited, you may want to serve a single grade or group of grades. Any child, age three through high school, is eligible to participate.

6. To answer this question, do not take a survey. Just give your best estimate. In the group of young people the project will serve:

a. What percent are:

% Black: _____ % Mexican American: _____ % White: _____
 % Am. Indian: _____ % Puerto Rican: _____ % Other (specify): _____
 % Asian: _____ % Other Hispanic: _____

b. What percent are ages:

% 3-5 years: _____ % 12-14 years: _____
 % 6-11 years: _____ % 15-High School: _____

c. What number are visually or otherwise disabled? _____

7. At your project's distributions, will all youngsters be able to choose whatever books they want, without adult interference?

Yes _____ No _____

8. Will the books at distributions span a range of reading levels and topics?

Yes _____ No _____

9. Briefly describe your plans for motivation activities to take place:

a. Before the distributions:

b. After the distributions:

Check here if you have attached an additional sheet: ☐

10. Approximately when (month and year) will the project have book distributions? (At least three for a school-year or year-round program, and at least two for a summer program.)

11. How many books will each youngster choose to keep during:

the school-year program _____ the summer program _____
(at least three) (at least two)

the year-round program _____
(at least five)

12. a. How many books do you estimate your project will purchase during the upcoming program year? _____
- b. How many are already on hand from previous years? _____
- c. What is the total number to be available (a+b)? _____

13. a. The GRAND TOTAL of volunteers involved in the planning and operation of your project (including fundraising, book selecting and ordering, helping with activities, distributions and logistics) is:

GRAND TOTAL VOLUNTEERS

Of these volunteers, how many are:

_____ parents of youngsters	_____ paid RIF project staff
_____ librarians	_____ representatives of your group
_____ teachers	_____ others (students, principals, senior citizens, celebrities)

- b. Every RIF project must form a committee of at least 3 persons to select the books for distribution. Of the total number of volunteers, how many members of the book selection committee are:

_____ parents of youngsters served	_____ teachers
_____ representatives of your group	_____ others (students, principals, senior citizens, celebrities)
_____ librarians	

Total on Book Selection Committee

- c. Will you have more than one book selection committee?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, how many? _____

- d. What factors will be considered by the book selection committee when deciding which books to purchase? (Book quality, cost, titles/authors, requests by youngsters, motivational activity themes, etc.)

14. a. Has the manager/administrator of the site(s) where your project will operate agreed to the use of the site(s)? Yes ____ No ____
- b. Has the manager/administrator been involved in the planning of the project? Yes ____ No ____
15. List below the groups and agencies that will support your project. Check off the kind of support they have pledged.

Name of Organization	Donates Funds	Provides Volunteers or Services	Both

16. Before your project's first activity, how will you relay information on the RIF program to the youngsters' parents or guardians?

_____ letters home _____ radio, TV _____ newsletter

_____ posters _____ local newspaper _____ other (specify)

Please give the name and address of your local newspaper:

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip Code _____

17. What roles will the parents of the children served play in the planning and operation of your project (fundraising, book selection, help with activities, help at distributions)?
18. Please tell us about your community: i.e. population, major industries, occupations, rural/urban, the children you serve and anything you think would be helpful as we consider your application.

19. If your project will operate at 2 or more sites, list the name of the coordinator and the address of each site below: (attach additional sheet/s if necessary).

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____

#

Name _____

Address _____



APPENDIX C

NOTES ON DATA IN CHAPTER 3

The figures in Tables 9 and 10 of Chapter 3 differ from the figures previously reported in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education, and subsequently reported in the Department's Annual Evaluation Report. The cause of this difference was an error in the formula used to aggregate local project data for the Quarterly Reports. Local projects are required to provide the national office of RIF with data on the total number of children served by the project, as well as data on the children's race/ethnicity, age, and disability status. The data on race/ethnicity, age, and disability status are reported as percentages of children served by the project. The formula used to calculate the aggregate figures in the RIF Quarterly Reports incorrectly summed the percentages that the local projects reported in each category of race/ethnicity, age, and disability status, and divided by the total number of **projects**. Correctly aggregating these data required converting the percentages reported in each category of race/ethnicity, age, and disability status into absolute numbers of each project, summing the numbers served by all local projects for each category, and dividing the total number in each category by the total number of **children** served by all RIF projects. The information provided in Tables 9 and 10 of this evaluation has been aggregated correctly.

It should also be noted that the figures presented in Tables 5 through 11 differ slightly from those presented in RIF Quarterly Reports to the Department of Education. The figures presented in the tables in this evaluation are based on data from the entire fiscal year, while the figures in RIF Quarterly Reports do not include data from the last two weeks of the fiscal year. Although the inclusion of these data in our calculation changed the totals reported for each of the tables, it did not significantly change the percentages shown in the tables.

APPENDIX D

NOTE: THIS IS NOT PART OF THE FEDERAL PROPOSAL - A VOLUNTARY FORM

Population Data Sheet

Potential donors and the U.S. Congress frequently ask for information about the children we serve. We want to track the populations served to better determine the needs of RIF projects. Please answer the following questions with your best estimates, **DO NOT TAKE A SURVEY.**

1. Do you plan to serve any children with special needs (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Homeless children | ☐ Visually/Physically handicapped children |
| ☐ Children receiving free/reduced lunch | ☐ Students at risk of dropping out or who have dropped out |
| ☐ Emotionally disturbed children | ☐ Children of unemployed parents |
| ☐ Foster children | ☐ Children in institutions (e.g. orphanages, hospitals) |
| ☐ Teen parents and/or their children | ☐ Chapter One students |
| ☐ ESL students | ☐ Head Start students |
| ☐ Public housing residents | ☐ Other compensatory education participants |
| ☐ Children of migrant farmworkers | ☐ Juvenile detention center detainees |
| ☐ Children lacking access to books | ☐ Children reading significantly below grade level |
| ☐ Geographically isolated children | ☐ Children of incarcerated/institutionalized parents |
| ☐ Children with other exceptional needs (describe) _____ | |

2. a. What is the total number of children to be served? _____
 b. Using your best estimate, what percentage of the total number of children served have special needs listed above? _____

3. a. Is there a free library in your community? Yes ☐ No ☐
 b. Does your facility have a library? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Please tell us why the children you serve/propose to serve need the RIF program. How can they benefit from a RIF project?

5. Are there needs or circumstances not named in the above list that apply to the children you serve/propose to serve?

Thank you for completing this form.
 Please return it to:

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
 600 Maryland Ave., S.W.
 Suite 500
 Washington, D.C. 20024

Organization _____
 Contact Name _____
 Phone() _____
 Address _____

